

VANCOUVER COMMUNITY COLLEGE, LANGARA

B. C. STUDIES

THE CANADIAN COSSACKS

A REVIEW OF FACTS
CONCERNING THE R.C.M.P.



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FOREWORD

I some time during the present war in the Dominion of Canada, an inventory will be taken of public opinion. The people will be required to express themselves on certain issues, after having been provided with an abundance of "ideas" on government, and possibly a few "facts" thrown in. In any case, the ideas will be more plentiful than the facts.

In regard to some departments of government, the "facts" are likely to be very carefully avoided; particularly those pertaining to the enforcement of law and order. During previous elections, little has been said regarding the operations of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. But the time has now come when such facts that are available should be made possible for public information. This the writer will attempt to do in the following pages. To be of service in this respect, it became necessary to wade through volumes of government Blue Books—an exceedingly wearisome task. This will be apparent to those who read the information thus provided.

No attempt is made to gratify those who make a fetish of "fine writing." Others no doubt could have presented the same facts in a manner more pleasing to those who regard diction and style as the apex of literary achievement. The chief concern in this case is a scrupulous presentation of facts regardless of whom they may please or displease.

The coming election appears during a momentous period in Canadian history and it becomes imperative that the facts be disclosed, that they be stated clearly and distinctly, and that they be considered not within the narrow limits of practical politics, but in the wider relationship of general world-wide social conditions. If what is reviewed in these pages can assist in a better understanding of the basic functions of government then the objective desired at this time will be satisfactorily achieved.

Vancouver, B.C., May, 1935.

JOHN L. MARTIN.

THE CANADIAN COSSACKS

W E read from time to time about the exploits of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. In terms of praise we are told of how by deeds of daring and persistent deedy methods, they have "got their man." They have been the theme of romance in press and moving picture to the extent that the admiration of an unsuspecting public has been worked up to the boiling point. However, those who have encountered these alleged heroes in violent industrial strikes and unemployed disturbances, fail to observe much of the romanticism in their achievements. They do not have to read of them in fiction—they see them in action.

While all such stories may be pleasing to the child-like faith of the common multitude, there are a few facts in the government blue-books which, when thoroughly digested, may somewhat wreck their otherwise engendered admiration. Facts and figures may be cold and uninteresting, but nevertheless very important. Whatever else stories may tell about the R.C.M.P., certain figures published in the Auditor-General's Report from year to year, fail to provide much ground for worship of these "gallant heroes of the plains."

Of course, when seen in action, they are not always seen on horseback. In fact, in many cases they are not even recognized. And it is the operations of these under-cover members of the force that should concern us at this time. People can come into contact with them and not know it; that is, unless they are wary enough not to fall into the traps prepared for them. Organized ostensibly for the capturing of law-breakers, incidents are numerous where they themselves are actually involved in the offense exposed. That such is no extravagant statement will later be shown.

In the Criminal Investigation Branch of the force, operatives are employed to trap possible violators of the law. Cases have already been drawn to the public's notice, wherein unsuspecting victims have been lured into their grasp. Their jobs being at stake, the capturing of the victims becomes an important consideration, and the tactics employed in some cases having become a matter of public suspicion, need not be reviewed at this time.

According to the R.C.M.P. accounts, these operatives under the Criminal Investigation Branch are known as "special agents." And according to the reports from year to year, the amounts expended on them are quite considerable.

The following table is made up of the amounts paid for "special agents" from 1920 to 1934 inclusive, and which can be verified from the Auditor-General's Reports for the years included in the period. They are as follows:

For Year Ending
March 31st of

1920	.....	\$73,312.26
1921	.....	87,236.14
1922	.....	94,198.06
1923	.....	75,792.49
1924	.....	59,407.81
1925	.....	49,480.39
1926	.....	28,137.49
1927	.....	25,365.32
1928	.....	25,286.79
1929	.....	34,430.16
1930	.....	21,772.19
1931	.....	26,065.56
1932	.....	34,925.56
1933	.....	88,707.15
1934	.....	52,605.69
Total	- - -	\$776,723.26

This does not include the amount spent on investigating offenses pertaining to opium and narcotics. Sums spent on that

(4)

phase were also very considerable. In addition, "special agents" were engaged from private detective agencies, details of which will be revealed later.

Then again, in addition to the regular force, there were employed a large number coming under the category of "special constables." From the same source (Auditor-General's Reports for each year) the following table is prepared showing the R.C.M.P. expenditures for "special constables," from 1920 to 1934 inclusive, in amounts as follows:

For Year Ending
March 31st of

1920	.....	\$ 47,509.46
1921	.....	123,247.67
1922	.....	116,337.63
1923	.....	77,742.43
1924	.....	72,611.65
1925	.....	73,104.91
1926	.....	73,466.92
1927	.....	79,616.33
1928	.....	82,876.65
1929	.....	89,107.39
1930	.....	105,225.83
1931	.....	107,007.29
1932	.....	110,864.75
1933	.....	188,385.25
1934	.....	221,268.16
Total	- - -	\$1,569,372.32

Two features stand out quite prominently in the above list. The first three items are for that period of tense industrial strife covered during the Winnipeg General Strike and the O.B.C.

(5)

activities. Other expenditures concerning these incidents will be dealt with later. The other feature is the amount spent from 1930 to 1934. This is during the period covered by the "Peace, Order and Good Government" policies of the present Administration, and the marked tendency of unemployment to become more and more of a serious problem. There was twice the amount spent on these "specials" during 1934 than in 1930. There are some who think that solution for the effects of unemployment can be found in the process of employing "special constables," but there are many more who have misgivings on that subject.

In addition to the "special agents" and "special constables," another type of operative is provided for out of a beneficent federal treasury. This species of rodent differs from the others in that they may be employed by some large corporation, or they may be one of the many unemployed, and at the same time draw pay from the R.C.M.P. They may even be in Relief Camps under assumed names. This classification is just a new one added to the others finding their place in the payroll of the force. They are known for the purposes of the R.C.M.P. as "casual civilians employed." That their numbers were due to rise as the economic conditions continue to sink was very apparent from figures available. During the years 1933 and 1934 the amount spent on what was designated as "casual civilian employment" was \$39,009.37. These individuals were not workers engaged in repairing barracks, etc. Such work as that was otherwise specified in the reports, and no claims can be laid as to their performance of any useful toil for the force, in the ordinary acceptance of the term. They were merely available for casual service required in the Department's operations. In ordinary parlance, such people might be regarded as just plain "stool-pigeons."

In all probability it would never occur to the hero-worshippers at the shrine of the R.C.M.P. that this same department is chiselling in on unemployed relief funds. Well, they can believe it or not, but the Auditor-General's Report gives us information which might lead us to believe that such is the case.

(6)

The report of 1932, the following items appear:
 Pay of Force \$18,393.00
 Maintenance \$62,265.00
 All of which, \$80,658.00, was charged to the "Unemployment and Farm Relief Act, 1931"

It is to be sincerely hoped that this "relief" money was not voted by Parliament for the purpose of paying "Monnies" to crack us over the heads. We would rather have almost anything strike our thinking apparatus than a policeman's baton. A few "ideas" may strike us in that way, but most of us would prefer that they hit us by less painful means.

Just how much of this money has been paid to their "casual civilian employed" who may be operating in Relief Camps, none of us have any knowledge. We do know, however, that there are heavy penalties imposed on people obtaining relief under assumed names, and for aught we know there may be hundreds of these operatives at work in relief camps. Were the Government blue-books to give us the names, etc., of these under-cover agents of the R.C.M.P., we might have something different to read about these "heroes." But the danger is not very acute of being able to obtain such information from a government deeply concerned in keeping it from public scrutiny.

On the assumption that this money was voted by parliament for the purpose of providing relief for destitute unemployed, it amount to an unscrupulous diversion of public funds to hand it over to a branch of government that has been used over and over again as an agency of public repression. But as the present Premier of this Dominion has on numerous occasions declared his policy to be that of "truthfulness," it is only natural to assume that the beating down of destitute unemployed is in logical conformity with his pronouncement.

As the economic conditions continue to affect with increasing intensity the political outlook of the people, the activities of these operatives become more and more a factor in governmental function. As conditions become worse, governments generally find it necessary from time to time to take an inventory of

(7)

public opinion. To do this, men are placed in different organizations, to report on the attitude taken regarding prevailing conditions. From the viewpoint of those in office, organizations having a progressive or radical tendency, are particularly worthy of observation in that respect. And, moreover, when the circumstances warrant, steps are taken to prevent the spread of ideas not approved of by the prevailing authorities. To do this, means of propriety count for but little, while expediency directed to the objective of crushing out adverse opinion is paramount. The incidents about to be reviewed at this point will serve to indicate some of the R.C.M.P. activities in that respect.

* * * * *

FOLLOWING up immediately after the Great War, there was in Canada as in other countries a period of tense industrial disturbance. The industries that had been operating at a feverish pitch during 1914-18, now realizing that the good times were about over, were considering the expediency of tightening up their belts, as it were. The workers who had been busy producing war material and equipment were gradually being told to go home and play. The boys were also returning from the trenches overseas—those who were able—and told to go out and play with the other boys. And with the screws applied tighter and tighter on the workers' standard of living, the fancied security of job tenure, union conditions, etc., were showing signs of wavering. There was, consequently, a disposition on the part of some of the more enlightened workers to look themselves over, and likewise, the structure of the organizations around which they had been swinging. There were definite changes being called for by a new condition that had arisen.

Aside from these changes in Canada, there had been fundamental changes in Russia, and the workers of this as well as of other countries were enquiring as to the possibilities confronting them. In Western Canada in particular, many of the trades unionists were doubtful that their rope would hold against the forces tugging them back to pre-war conditions. Conventions were held at which the possibilities were discussed and changes in structure of organization considered. One of these

(8)

resulted in the formation of the One Big Union, or O.B.U.

This new organization and the strike activities in which it engaged were a source of much vexation to the authorities. Every available secret agent was set to work spying on the leaders, attending conventions and public meetings, and following up every phase of its organized effort. The strikes declared throughout Western Canada, particularly that of Winnipeg, found every sleuth of the R.C.M.P., to say nothing of their allies of the private professional type, engaged in tracking every movement made by the strikers. The result was that certain leaders were arrested, and after a lengthy trial sentenced to imprisonment in the penitentiary. The amount of evidence dug up was voluminous and without regard to cost.

A stock question raised by politicians when the unemployed ask for Relief, is: "Where is the money to come from?" There was no such question raised regarding the trial in Winnipeg of Ivons, Ruessell, Pritchard, and the other strike leaders involved. It was just a case of put them in prison and pay for it later, and no questions asked. According to Hunsard in 1924, the costs involved by the government in defeating the Winnipeg General Strike was \$196,821.00. As might be expected, a large portion of this was spent by the R.C.M.P.

At this point we might digress a little. At the time of writing, there are in Vancouver upwards of 1700 single men on strike from the National Defense Relief Camps. The results of their protest thus far, however, so far as the federal authorities are concerned, is the transferring of one hundred or more members of the R.C.M.P. from Regina to Vancouver. Were the government to provide Relief for the strikers, even at the rate of one dollar per day, and to spend the same amount as was spent in defeating the Winnipeg strike, all the boys could be kept for 98 days. But then, as circumstances show, governments more often deem it expedient to suppress the unemployed when asking for relief, than to provide the meagre allowance asked for.

In regard to the Winnipeg strike and the O.B.U. activities in general, all the money, of course, was not spent in one place; particularly that spent by the R.C.M.P. It was used in various-

(9)

ways and at different points throughout Western Canada. Statistics, it is conceded, may not be very interesting to the ordinary reader; in fact, they are likely to be rather tedious. But the writer has in mind that some people may have vivid recollections of the hectic days of the Winnipeg strike, and the part played by the O.B.L.; therein, and may be able to check up on the incidents involved in the expenditures referred to. To such people, the figures may be just as interesting as boring to others. But for reasons of space, certain individual items will have to be grouped together in the categories to which they belong. Before giving them, however, assurances must be given as to their source.

The following groups of expenditures are derived from the Auditor-General's Report for the year ending March 31, 1920, as those being made by the R.C.M.P. during the previous year.

Strike duty (different parts)	\$ 1,687.58
Investigation of O.B.L. at Pas, Hudson's Bay Junction, Big River, etc.	629.05
Photographs of labour agitators, etc.	15.19
Translating foreign publications	55.60
Investigating labour conditions	249.90
Reporting labour meetings and speeches..	208.85
Obtaining prohibited literature	343.49
Investigating labour and socialist activities	3,455.71
Plainclothes duty (at points of industrial disturbances	9,951.56
Expenses at different points in connection with trials of Ivens <i>et al</i> (Winnipeg trials)	9,032.75

These figures by no means represent all the R.C.M.P. expenses in connection with the strike situation of that time. They are just some of them, and can be checked up from the source previously given, as to the amounts and the localities in which spent. What figures are available, suffice to indicate at least some of the operations used when organization for industrial betterment is attempted. Incidentally, they should also

(10)

help to clear up in the minds of some people, any doubts they may have regarding what is known as the "class struggle." Notwithstanding all this onslaught, the O.B.L. still persisted. And consequently, more money was due to be spent by the R.C.M.P., in order to complete the task it was given to do. While the expenditures made, as indicated above, were much and varied, the amount spent during the following year was also of considerable magnitude. A grouping together of some of them will still further reveal the functions of the R.C.M.P. in industrial disputes.

According to the Auditor-General's Report, for the year ending March 31, 1921, some of what was spent by the R.C.M.P. can be grouped as follows:

Attending labour meetings and reporting speeches (different places)	\$ 41.86
Plainclothes duty (at points of industrial disturbances)	62.75
Investigating agitators and suspects (Lethbridge and Prince Albert)	81.30
Strike Duty (as per following items):	
Strike at Minto Mines	\$ 328.82
Strike at Mironichi River...	90.45
Miners' strike, Cadomin Dist.	19.50
Strike in South Okanagan...	25.10
Expenses of detachment to Thorold on strike duty	1,658.15

Investigating Self-Determination League (various places)	1,832.02
O.B.L. activities (different points)	2,617.50
Investigating Bolshevik and labour conditions (Edmonton and Regina)	2,853.17
	3,402.50

The above items together with others could be elaborated upon in detail showing some very interesting sidelines revealing the *carte blanche* principle upon which the force is set to work.

(11)

The amounts paid for attending labour meetings, reporting speeches, etc., are quite significant in themselves. So much so, that the Federal Government feels very much displeased when the facts are drawn to its attention. But occasionally very "phrasing" questions on such points are asked in the House at Ottawa, much to the discomfiture of those sitting on the government side. In respect to this item, it might be well at this point to note the following series of questions and answering appearing in Hansard, 1924, page 470.

Questions by J. S. Woodsworth:

- 1—Were members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police present at a labour meeting at Nanaimo, Sept. 16, 1923?
- 2—Is it the policy of the government to use the police to report on the activities of the labour organizations?
- 3—Is it the policy of the government to use public funds and public officials to report the meetings of the other political parties in this House?

The Hon. E. Lapointe, Minister of Justice, replied to the same as follows:

- 1—The Minister is informed that two members of the force attended a public meeting at that date.
- 2—No.
- 3—No.

We can thus conclude from the Minister's reply that:

- 1—The police were there.
- 2—They were there at variance with the government's policy.
- 3—They were not paid to be there out of public funds.

Many of us might be satisfied with the Minister's explanation, were it not for the very apparent discrepancy existing be-

(12)

tween his statements and the accounts as provided by the Auditor-General, and as previously outlined. Just as we have a mind to, we might accept the statement of either. It is difficult, however, to reconcile both!

Previous reference has been made to the amount spent on "special agents." This applied to agents operating directly under the control of the R.C.M.P. But the force also hires operatives from outside sources, namely, private detective agencies. There is not a labor publication on this continent that has not from time to time reported the activities of private detective agencies in labor disputes. Nor does a labor union exist but which at some time or other has had to encounter the operatives of such agencies. Incidents have been numerous of the brutality displayed by these hired thugs in the course of strikes. Yet, apparently the R.C.M.P., not satisfied with the brutality that its own operatives can hand out, have to hire the underworld thugs, these alleged detective agencies specialize in providing when needed.

The names about to be mentioned bring up very unpleasant memories in the minds of those who for years have been in touch with the attempts of organized labor to better the workers' conditions. According to the Auditor-General's Report, the R.C.M.P. during the year ending March 31, 1920, and the two years following, added to its strength, the services of the following agencies, and charged to the Federal Treasury, the following bill for their operations:

Employers' Detective Agency	\$12,688.56
Pinkerton's National Detective Agency ..	3,297.68
Thiel Detective Service	4,270.88

Total for Three Years\$20,257.12

The admission of all this is, of course, very distasteful to the Government, and it would prefer that such matters be not discussed. In fact, statements in blue-books notwithstanding, it denies any insinuation that the underworld thugs of such agencies are used by any of its departments. But unfortunately,

(13)

to take the joy out of their parliamentary life, such matters are occasionally brought to the surface.

In Hansard of March 20, 1934, page 1664, there appears a question raised on this point.

Mr. J. S. Woodsworth asks during the debate on the R.C.M.P. estimates, the following question:

"Is it the policy of the department to employ detectives from private firms?"

Hon. H. Guthrie, Minister of Justice, replies:

"No. Any in the secret service belong to the police force itself, and not to private firms."

In view of the figures previously given, concerning operatives of private agencies employed by the force, another discrepancy thus appears.

The Auditor-General says they are employed. The Minister of Justice says they are not. Which of the two statements is correct is a matter for the reader to decide.

Be that as it may, the operations of secret agents in workers' organizations, be they hirings from private detective agencies, or whether they operate under the halo of legal protection, are matters but little to the workers. Their respective functions are identical—the protection of the prevailing owners of industry and the social system in which they rule.

* * * * *

While the amount spent during the three years following the Great War was quite considerably, still more was due to be disposed of. The political aftermath also required attention. For, if industrial turmoil was for the time being somewhat subdued, the disturbed political feeling among the workers still remained. This required to be watched, and the police force was therefore instructed to continue its vigilance. A new political party had sprung into being, called the "Workers' Party of Canada," later changing its name to the "Communist Party." This party espoused the principles of the Third Internationale, and with the happenings in Russia still in mind, those of weight and influence in Canadian capitalism had grave forebodings of

(14)

what might happen were this new movement allowed to grow unchecked.

Groups favorable to this line of thought had been formed in the larger cities, mostly in the West, and appeared to be making headway. To stop this, those who had most to lose were demanding action: so much so that the R.C.M.P. instructed one of its ranks to give it special attention. The one given the task was Constable John Leopold, who got busy right away, joining the Regina group under the assumed name of "E. W. (Jack) Esselwein." This was in the year 1921. He got along fine with them, afterwards becoming secretary of the group. He also attended many conventions, and took an active part generally in the building up of this new revolutionary movement,—later declared by the authorities to be an illegal organization. So popular did he become in time around those parts, that he became an officer of the Regina Trades and Labor Council, and was quite active in the trades union movement of that city. This, it will be observed, is at variance with the denial by the Minister of Justice, previously quoted, that such is the policy of the R.C.M.P.

One of the basic methods of this new movement was that of "boring from within." That the "boring" process of "Comrade" Esselwein had been quite effective was revealed later at the trial of the nine Communist leaders in Toronto.

By 1922, sufficient units had been formed to justify the calling of a convention. This was held in March of 1922, and the first issue of the *Worker* (Toronto) on March 15, 1922, spreads across its front page the historic announcement: "The Workers' Party of Canada Declares for a United Front and a Workers' Republic."

"Comrade" Esselwein was not a delegate to that convention. There may have been definite reasons why he was left at home on that occasion. He may have been in the hospital at about that time. For in the Auditor-General's Report of the R.C.M.P.

(15)

expenditures for the year ending March 31, 1923, the following item appears:

Constable J. Leopold, medical and hospital treatment\$199.35

Obviously it would not be good judgment to have it appear in the accounts of the R.C.M.P. that the above amount had been paid in connection with the illness of "Comrade" Esselwein of the Workers' Party. Those in command are not so crude as all that.

But he was able to attend the conventions of 1923, 1924 and 1925, which he did as a delegate from Regina. In 1927, he transferred to the Winnipeg branch, and operated there for awhile in his Communist-R.C.M.P. role. He later went to Toronto, about the time of the Arcos raids, and just prior to the fifth Communist convention in 1927. He remained there for a while, except for a visit to Port Arthur, where he reported on the I.W.W. About this time he also attended a convention of the Lailway Shop Crafts in Winnipeg.

By the spring of 1928 the Communist Party began to have some misgivings about his activities, and on the basis of evidence submitted to the Central Executive Committee he was expelled from the Party. The report of this, together with his picture, appears in the *Toronto Worker* of May 26, 1928. Having completed all the "boring" he could do so far as the Communists were concerned, his services as a "stool-pigeon" were then no longer effective. For when such people become known, their careers in that respect are at an end. They can be moved about, of course, and that presumably is the reason why his photograph was published in the *Toronto Worker*, that all who could read would govern themselves accordingly.

In the meantime, his services being recognized by the force, he was promoted from the rank of constable to that of sergeant. By this time the force had quite an accumulation of evidence against the Communist Party, and in the fall of 1931, nine of the leaders were arrested. During the trials occurring in November of that year, quite a sensation was precipitated when

(16)

Sergeant John Leopold, alias "Comrade Jack Esselwein," stepped into the witness box and testified as to activities of the Party and his relations therewith. The result is now a matter of common knowledge, the accused leaders being found guilty and sentenced for a number of years to Kingston penitentiary. Whatever else was proven at the trial, the evidence was very clear as to the depths the R.C.M.P., the Crosses of Canada, will submerge themselves in order to crush out working class activity.

There are no statements appearing in the Auditor-General's Report of any money received by this operative during the period he was in the Communist Party, other than the item previously given. Nor is there much likelihood of any details being provided us, either for the individual under discussion or any of the other rodents of his specie, burrowing into efforts of the workers' to better their conditions. Whilst it may be a matter of indifference to some that these underground methods are being applied to radical organizations, it is well, nevertheless, that the more moderate groups be not too absolutely certain as to their own activities being immune from such underground tactics.

* * * * *

THAT provincial governments and municipal authorities are well informed as to the espionage tactics of the R.C.M.P., there is not the slightest doubt. In fact, they admit the same from time to time. Whenever public protest over some social injustice tends toward the breaking point, the authorities themselves in attempting to justify drastic action, often provide us with information otherwise unintended. Should a strike occur or the unemployed assemble to demonstrate their protest, the public are often deluded into thinking such occurrences are the machinations of the Communists, or "paid agent from Moscow." That is the smoke-screen often set up to conceal the actual conspiracies of the forces of government themselves. That there are paid agents, is conceded by the testimony of blue-books and the statements of public men. But such agents receive more from Ottawa than from Moscow—if any.

(17)

hired on the basis of their brutality, law-breaking and strike-breaking proclivities. That such agencies have been used by the R.C.M.P. has been proven by government blue-books. Other evidence indicates that the force itself has a record of similar nature. And it is probable that the R.C.M.P. or their hirings from private detective agencies may have been trying to "bore within" the camp strikers' organizations.

We have read in the past, with bitter resentment, of the methods employed by the Cossacks in Russia during the Czarist regime. It never occurred to many of us that this Dominion would also have its counterpart. But the records show that we have nothing to be proud of in the means used to suppress the people's aspirations. Apologists for the existing political and economic set-up delight in telling us of the alleged rights and privileges we have in comparison with other countries. But the experiences of the people and the testimony of public documents issue a clear and concise admonition to us. Still more vigilance is going to be necessary as the purchase-price of the liberty we desire. We may view with resentment the methods used in other lands to ruthlessly crush the people's desire for the abundance surrounding them, but at the same time, it is imperative that we regard as a matter of prime importance, the awakened vigilance of a people determined to be free.